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ABSTRACT

A pilot study examined the influence of team teaching, the use of computers, conferencing, and one-to-one immediate feedback on the development of writing skills of learning disabled students at Genesee Community College. Twelve students identified as learning disabled (LD) and who demonstrated great difficulty in introductory English classes were enrolled in a separate, team-taught section of the second semester English class and provided with computers, tutors, and a professional consultant. These students followed the normal second semester English curriculum, and their writing abilities were measured against the components of fluency, content, conventions, syntax, and vocabulary with pre- and posttest writing samples. Results indicated that fluency, syntax, content, and spelling improved, and 83% of the students passed the course. A dramatic improvement was noted in self-image and self-motivation and was attributed to either the use of word processors or individual instruction. The students also seemed to gain a considerable measure of independence and control over their writing. Findings suggest that the creation of a special English section for LD students was helpful to the students involved. (Six tables of data and 10 references are appended.) (RS)

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Teaching Writing to Learning Disabled Students:

A Pilot Study

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July, 1988

TEACHING WRITING TO LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS: A PILOT STUDY

Maxine M. Long

INTRODUCTION

In the fall semester of 1988, Genesee Community College may have as many as 53 learning disabled students (Garrett and Welch 3) on campus, 25 of whom will be returning students and 28 who will be new. A year ago, the college had identified 19 LD students on campus. In the fall of 1986 the college had no students that were identified as LD. During the Spring semester of 1988, for the first time, an English 101 section was designed exclusively for LD students. In the the Fall of of 1988, there will be a special section of English 100 for LD students and these same students will continue into a special English 101 section in the Spring of 1989.

The significance of all of this is two-fold. First, throughout the SUNY system there is an increase in the number of LD students both self-identified and later identified by the receiving institution. In their manual *Serving the Student With Learning Disability* Garret and Welch state that

> In 1985, approximately 800 SUNY students identified themselves learning disabled and in 1986 the number had grown to 1200, and it will continue to grow as services improve at the secondary level and with increased recognition by parents and school personnel that many students with learning disabilities are capable of pursuing goals in higher education. (1)

Second, although all post-secondary schools must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (*Faculty Handbook*, 3), Genesee Community College in particular has been making a concerted and conscientious effort to develop a comprehensive program for the learning disabled student.

Although there are no previous data about learning disabled students at Genesee Community College, such students no doubt have always been present. After all, 15-20% of the population in

the United States is learning disabled, and as an open-door institution, GCC must accept anyone who has a high school diploma or the equivalent. It stands to reason, then, that there have always been those students who once were labeled as "dumb" but were in fact suffering from one or more learning disabilities. Until recently, neither the faculty nor the staff have been sophisticated enough to recognize or help such students, but during the past two years the College has been actively developing a comprehensive program for them.

Growing out of both a history as a caring and nurturing institution and the more immediate concerns of the Dean of Students and other college staff members, the establishment of the special English sections reflects the college's acting upon recommendations from two reports. Rocha urged that the "administration continue to seek ways to better serve students with handicapping condition" (27). Schworm advocated, among other things, the design of special orientation programs and courses for LD students (item 6 of "Summary of Recommendations").

Because of the nature of their neurological dysfunction, LD students may have academic difficulties in any class, but it is in the area of written expression that the LD student is likely to encounter the most difficulties. The literature suggests a variety of curriculum considerations and pedagogical techniques which can be used in a writing class to assist the LD student. Specifically the *curriculum* needs to be process oriented and task specific (Englert and Raphael; Bos). The present English curriculum at GCC is both of these. However, the necessary *pedagogical techniques*--team teaching, use of computers, conferencing, one-to-one immediate feedback (Graham and Harris)--cannot be done in a regular classroom.

By mutual agreement among faculty, counselors, and support staff, it was decided to offer one section of English 101 to LD students during the Spring semester of 1988. This is a report of that class from my standpoint as the English faculty member who had the major responsibility for the course.

FORMATION OF THE CLASS

I was first approached about LD students by Sue Copeland, the technical specialist in charge of services to disadvantaged students. She requested that I take several LD students in my regular spring English 101 class. I had to decline since I was not scheduled to teach 101 in the Spring, but the request prompted me to mention the concerns I had about placing LD students in regular composition sections. I had had a few in my Fall English 101 classes and in a public speaking class. I had felt a great deal of frustration because the size of the classes and the organization had not allowed me to give to those students the kind of instruction I felt they needed.

From that discussion came the plan for a special 101 section open only to LD students who would be recommended by Sue. Sue and I each discussed the idea with our respective deans, who in turn shared the idea with Dean Fossedal. President Steiner then gave approval, and in November the special section was created.

The Students

Sue identified 12 students to be enrolled in the class. They were chosen on the basis of having been documented as learning disabled and having a history of either great difficulty with English or at least being a high risk for a regular ENG 101 class. Of those, 8 had successfully completed ENG 100, 2 had never been enrolled in ENG 100, and 2 had been enrolled in ENG 100 three times without passing the course. Several of the students had also been in ENG 101 before without passing it. Of the 12 students, 5 had attempted ENG 101 at least once--one person had tried it twice--and 7 were trying it for the first time. Nine of the students had met the college's reading requirement. Table 1 shows the students' past records with ENG 100 and 101.

Table 1: Students' Prior Experiences with Freshman English

Student	*# of times enrolled in English 100*	*grade*	*# of times enrolled in English 101*	*grade*
001	1	C	0	
002	1	C	0	
003	1	C	0	
004	1	C	0	
005	1	C	1	X
006	1	C	1	W
007	1		1	D
008	1	C	0	
009	3	X, W, C	0	
010	3	X, X, X	0	
011	0		1	X
012	1	X	2	W, W

The Support Staff

I had had neither training in nor extensive experience with LD students, so I requested the support of other professionals in the hope that we might become an integrated team in teaching the class. Thus Judy DeLuca, who had already tutored several of the students in the Instructional Assistance Center (IAC), came into the classroom each day to actively assist the students with their writing. Judy also continued doing an extensive amount of work with the students on a one-to-one basis in the IAC. Ron Schworm, a consultant from Rochester, was in the classroom on several Fridays in the beginning of the semester, but as there were more and more demands made on his time, his contribution was to meet with Judy and me for an hour on Fridays to evaluate the week's work and plan for the upcoming classes. Support came also from SCT and other members of the

computer staff. Jacque Waggoner, the Manager of Academic Computing, came to one class during the first week to teach students the basic computer commands. We also called on Doug Fox, Dave Fuller, and work-study students from the computer center when we got stuck.

The Facility

At my request, the class met in D205, the word processing lab. With 24 stations in that room, it allowed for the students, if they chose, to spread out so they would not be distracted by each other. The classroom also has a large screen connected to the teacher's terminal so that demonstration and writing models can be handled with ease.

After consulting with Jacque, Katheryn Clayton, and Judy DeLuca, I decided to have the class learn to use Volkswriter 3 instead of the student version of WordPerfect with its minimum of commands. The extra features--especially the help menu on the screen at all times, the spelling checker, and the thesaurus--would compensate for the extra time it would take for students to learn to use Volkswriter. We felt that these features were important for the LD student, who has trouble memorizing and spelling and may have a limited written vocabulary.

Jacque provided a formatted disk for each student the day she came to class, and students used the disk for the entire semester. For each class period I was responsible for picking up and returning to the Computer Lab the diskette tray of Volkswriter 3 program disks.

The Curriculum

Since almost all of the students who would be enrolled in the class had completed or attempted English 100, and only a few had attempted English 101, Sue and I agreed that the class would follow as closely as possible the standard 101 curriculum. The students would cover units on expressive, informative, and persuasive writing and write a library research paper. I felt that the text used by the English faculty for the ENG 101 course (*Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition*,

Kinneavy, McCleary and Nakadate) was too theoretical and not appropriate for this class, so I chose McCleary's new text *Writing All the Way*. It is designed as a basic writing text and therefore contains little theory; instead, it provides structured and realistic writing assignments in a systematic and sequential way and also includes many exercises. The units in the book included expressive, informative, and persuasive writing, the same units covered in ENG 101.

At the beginning of the course, I planned to use the same syllabus as that of my regular ENG 101 sections, which included 5 papers, 3 essay exams, and several practice papers adding up to about 6,000-8,000 words of writing per student. That syllabus was, however, far too demanding for this particular section, and I had to make several adjustments.

Class Operation

The class met on a MWF schedule. Although at first Judy, Ron, and I felt that the 1 1/2 hours of a TR class would be better for us, but because of the longer class time, we questioned the concentration spans of the students and therefore chose the one-hour classes, three times a week.

As I mentioned, I had to adjust the course syllabus. Rather than turning in 5 papers for a grade, students completed 4 and took only one hourly exam instead of 3. They did, however, write many more drafts of papers and exams than students would do in a regular English section of mine, so according to my estimates, they still wrote about 6,000 words.

To explain briefly how I covered the units of the course, perhaps an annotated calendar will be helpful:

Weeks 1 & 2	Introduced students to basic computer commands and made first paper assignment; encouraged listing of ideas as pre-writing; students submitted rough draft of paper which I carefully critiqued, and then students turned in finished copy; paper did not have to be written on the word processor.

Week 3	Introduced aims of discourse theory; Ron taught me mapping techniques for organizing an essay answer, which I then showed to students, modeled the use of a map, and wrote sample answers; required students to use word processor all of their work; students were able to analyze only one discourse example per class period.
Week 4	Students turned in analyses of 3 discourses; in many cases they had simply copied my versions but some had tried to put them in their own words; prior to turning them in, students had had to use the spell-check and make a list of all their misspelled words.
Week 5	Students turned in analyses of 3 remaining discourses, again many of them copying my models; required spell-check and maintaining individual spelling list.
Week 6	Students completed a second practice overview test; they required less and less modeling of maps and sample answers from me; automatically did spelling checks and were able to analyze two discourses per class period.
Week 7	Students spent the week taking the overview exam, which was turned in for a grade. Note: In a regular class I would have spent no more than 4 weeks on the overview unit, and students would be able to analyze all 6 discourses in an hour.
Weeks 8-11	Introduced the term paper unit, made the assignment, and spent several class periods in the library; helped students with finding and narrowing a topic; explained note cards and bibliography cards; did sentence combining exercises from the book to help students with appropriate style.
Weeks 12-16	Briefly covered persuasive writing; assigned paper for which the students submitted drafts before their final copy; also did exercises to help with style.
Week 17	For their "final" students wrote another expressive paper using the same assignment as at the beginning of the semester.

On a daily basis, the class was run much like a lab. I began by giving directions for that particular day, and during the rest of class each student worked at his/her own terminal with Judy and me circulating to offer assistance. Except at the beginning of the term paper unit, I did little if any lecturing. During the overview unit I used the overhead to do my modeling for mapping and writing essay answers. I did not make as much use of the computer/screen combination as I might have. In many cases, each student had his/her individual problems which were easier to deal with on a one-to-one basis.

RESULTS

Although I had no research design in mind when I started the course, certainly I was curious to know what improvement, if any, the students had made by the end of the semester. On a daily basis Judy and I saw a great deal of positive change, both on an affective and cognitive level. As the semester went on, we noticed that the students seemed to become more comfortable with themselves. Whereas initially, as Judy and I would circulate, each student frequently stopped typing when we approached their carrel, by the end of the semester, Judy and I often had to ask if we could interrupt them to make a suggestion. And while there never was any real *esprit de corps* established for the whole group, most of the students had at least formed dyads by the end of the semester. And they all appeared to be equally comfortable with Judy and me. At the beginning of the semester there was some resistance to the computers but even before the half-way point of the semester most of the students had their terminals on and were ready to go by the time I got to class. Doing a spell-check quickly became automatic for almost all of them, and by the end of the semester some were even attempting more extensive editing by moving text.

Evidence such as this is, however, rather anecdotal, and I wanted something more quantitative. I also needed to develop a profile of the LD college student writer. There are two approaches for

evaluating writing samples, atomistic and holistic scoring. In the former, one isolates subcategories of writing e.g. spelling, vocabulary, tense agreement, coherence, and in the latter, one examines the entire piece of writing, internalizing all of the subcategories and making an overall judgment. Both methods are equally valid. A holistic approach is usually used when one has to look at a large quantity of papers and is only interested in making gross judgments. Atomistic scoring is more time consuming, but may reveal more information about a paper. I chose atomistic scoring and used an assessment model developed by Stephen Isaacson. Isaacson, in his research with elementary level exceptional children, measured their writing abilities against the components of fluency, content, conventions, syntax and vocabulary (529). The same elements can be applied to college students. I chose the Isaacson model, not only because it was a reasonable one, but because it also afforded me the chance to look at several aspects of writing. As I mentioned earlier, I had no research model in mind at the onset of the course. I thought Issacson's model allowed me a maximum of information.

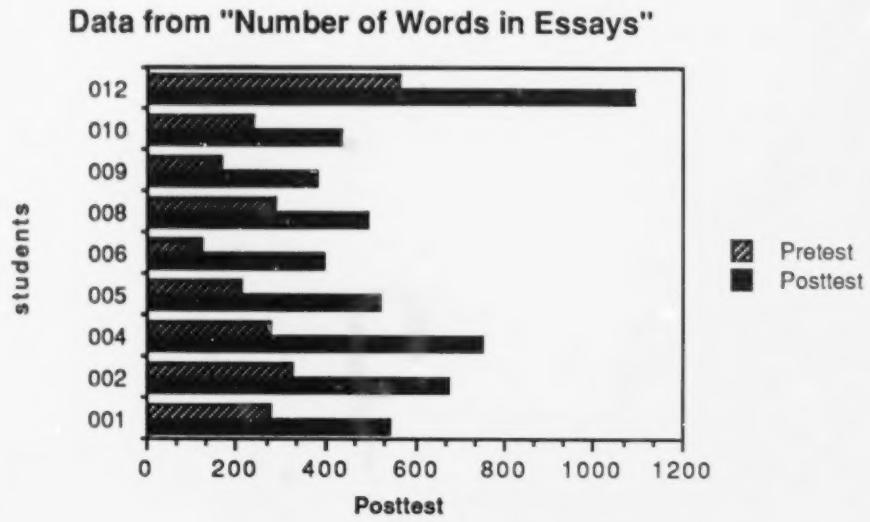
I chose to compare the two expressive papers the students had written, calling one a pre-test and the other a post-test. The pre-test was written during the first week of class and the post-test during the last week. There were 9 student papers included in the sample. One dropped the course within the first month, and I did not have copies of pre-tests from two of the students.

Fluency

Fluency, the number of written words, was the most obvious difference between the two writings for all of the students. I had stipulated no length for the pre-test, but for the post-test I asked for a minimum of 500 words. Five of the students more than doubled their length, two others came very close to that and the remaining two made very respectable improvements. Table 2 shows their percent of increase.

Table 2: Increase in Word Count Between Pre and Post-Test

Name	*#of words/ pre-test*	*#of words/ post-test*	*% increase*
001	272	540	98
002	324	672	107
004	275	753	173
005	210	519	147
006	123	396	221
008	287	494	72
009	162	376	132
010	236	432	83
012	564	1092	93



Some might argue that looking at word count may not be an appropriate measure. There is the risk that students have produced quantity but not quality. While I would agree with that in some

cases, here we are dealing with such an inability to generate words for the pre-test that I think counting words is a valid measure. Furthermore, as college students they must be able to generate ideas and provide elaboration of the statements they make. By comparison, the writing sample requirement which is used as an entrance exam at GCC requires a minimum of 500 words and anything substantially below that automatically places that student in English 100. As Isaacson points out, there is a positive correlation between an increase in a student's fluency and "other measures of writing skills." (530)

Content

By content, Isaacson refers to features usually identified as rhetorical issues: idea generation, coherence, organization and sense of audience. I used a scale that included only those rhetorical features that were part of the assignment: aim, organization, sense of audience, and explanation.

I should note here that in this particular area, where I am looking to see how well the students address the rhetorical features of the assignment, an LD writer may not be a great deal different than many of our college students. The ability to handle aim, audience and appropriate elaboration in a writing situation comes with both age and experience. Much of our student body is lacking in both. Nonetheless, since one of the major purposes of the composition course is to be able to teach students how to do this, I was especially interested in making a comparison here.

Rhetorical Features

I identified the primary rhetorical features that I wanted to measure and created a scale of 1-4 with 4 being the most complete coverage of those features and 1 as the minimal level of acceptability. See Table 3.

Table 3: Pretest and Posttest Writing Assignment and Scoring Guide

Writing Assignment: Write an essay about a recent personal triumph, an accomplishment in your personal or academic life that you are proud of. It need not be anything that another person would find important, but in your essay be sure to explain why it is important to you. In other words include the necessary background of your story so that the reader knows what lead up to the triumph.

Scale

4

The paper includes a clearly stated triumph, at beginning and/or at end, a complete narration with adequate elaboration and an explanation of why the triumph is important

3

The paper includes a clearly stated triumph, complete narration with adequate elaboration, no clear explanation of why he triumph is important

2

The paper included a clearly stated triumph, unclear narrative sequence, some elaboration, and no clear explanation of why the triumph is important

1

The paper includes a triumph which is stated or implied, an unclear narrative sequence, little if any elaboration, no clear explanation or implication of why the triumph is important

I arrived at this scale as a result of having taught expressive writing many times in other types of classes and by looking at these particular papers. Since the task is written in such a way that clearly defines purpose/aim, (in this case self-expression) asks for a particular kind of organizational pattern (narration) and identifies the writer's relationship to he audience ("something you are proud of . . ."), the evaluation tool should include the same items. I know from past experience that most writers have little difficulty in stating a thesis, in this case identifying their triumph. The difficulties arise when they have to consider their relationship to their audience (e.g. explain how much background the reader needs to have) and when they have to analyze their actions (explain why the triumph is important).

Based on my past experience, students have the most difficulty analyzing their own actions, and thus I made this feature the least important of the three I identified here. Furthermore, being able to identify the focus of a paper and to put ideas in sequence are basic to successful writing, which is why I placed these features first on the scale.

Since this was only a pilot study I did not have an elaborate means for scoring these papers. I scored them myself according to the scale. The results are in Table 4.

Table 4: Scores of Posttest and Pretest Papers Based on Rhetorical Features

Name	*Pre-test score*	*Post-test score*
001	1	3
002	2	4
004	2	4
005	1	3
006	1	3
008	1	2
009	1	2
010	2	3
012	3	4

Because I was the only one to score these papers, these scores cannot be considered very reliable. The usual procedure is to have at least two people do the rating. However, the scores at least indicate that the improvement implied by the increased fluency probably does show up in content.

Coherence

Coherence , of course, refers to the overall organization of a piece of writing and how well it "hangs together." Within that is the element of cohesion. Cohesion refers to linguistic features that tie sentences together, Those features may include substituting nouns for pronouns, using conjunctions, ellipses, or repeating related words.

In this particular set of papers there was only one student who had major problems with cohesion in her pretest and little if any difficulty with her post-test. But since her two papers are very good examples of the functions of cohesion in a paper I have included excerpts here. (The paper is reproduce as the student wrote it, including the errors.)

> Last semester was my first time in college. It is so different from
> high school. I was afraid to even come to college because I didn't
> think I would do well.I fund high school difficult. I knew it was
> going to be hard work. I would work hard and sometimes get bad
> grades. It hurt me so much I just wanted to quit and give up on school
> all together. I kept working at it though. I was getting all the extra
> help I could get. I didn't even think it would be possible for me to
> even make it through one semester. After all the extra hard work
> and extra help I finally felt as though I was making progress, When I
> got my report card my grade point average was 2.89 and I was so happy.
> I felt relieved, It made me feel that all the hard work had paid off.
> Now I want to go on with college.

Although there are several problems in this section, what I want to point out is how the writer has trouble letting the reader know the sequence of events. Beginning with line 3 "I knew it . . ." the reader is not clear whether all of the "its" that follow refer to high school or college.

By comparison look at the opening paragraph of her posttest.

> My personal triumph was getting through the first year of
> college. For me this was a triumph because I wasn't even
> planning to go to college. However, I decided to try it. I made
> it through one year of college and I am proud of myself.

By a use of repetition (e.g. the word college is repeated three times) and by substituting appropriate pronouns, the writer has made the paragraph more coherent. Being able to use coheive

features and create coherence are difficult for LD students. Helping them to overcome this should be an area of focus next year.

Conventions

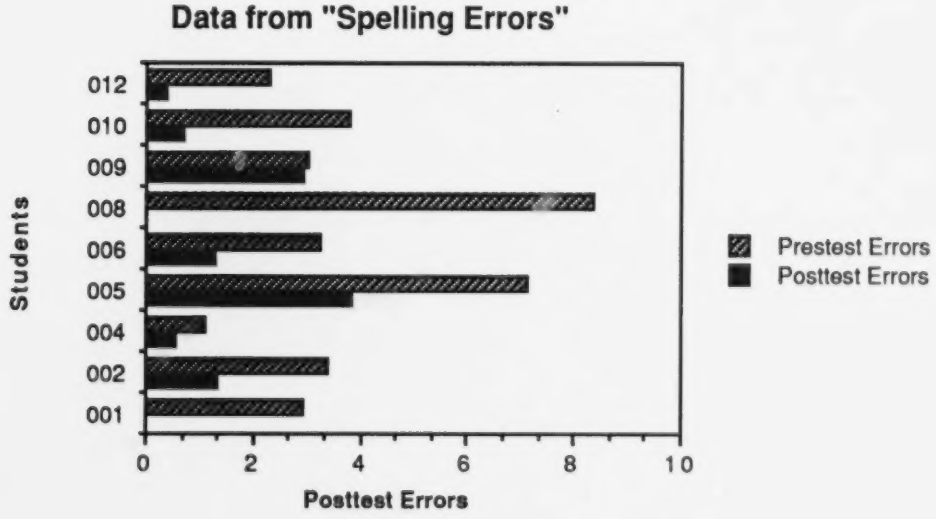
In examining conventions, Isaacson is looking at spelling, punctuation, handwriting and grammatical errors. In these sets of papers spelling was the error that was the most noticeable. An improvement in spelling--more accurately stated, the willingness to use the spell-check on the computer, is another noticeable improvement. LD writers by nature spell phonetically and while some of their inventions seem more sensible than the accepted orthography--"depreshion" and "nervisness" were two that I saw this semester--helping them deal with that problem is a major concern.

Word processors are both a boon and a bane in this area. They help because of the built-in spell check, but of course the problem is that the spell -check cannot read for contextual clues, so students still may not turn in a "perfect" paper. Another concern shared by many is that the spell-check still does not encourage students to correct their spelling in their own minds. All the students have to do is ask for suggestions and by process of elimination they will find the correct spelling. While I agree with these arguments, I also contend that by the time one is dealing with adult learners, it is more important to give them the tools which will allow them some degree of control. The spell-check does provide them with that.

A look at the papers shows that in all cases the students were able to decrease the number of spelling errors per 100 words. (That measure of counting as an arbitrary one on my part). In counting spelling errors I also included missing inflections and separated compound words.

Table 5: Decrease in Spelling Errors, Per 100 Words, Between Pre-Test and Post-test Papers

Name	*# of errors pre-test*	*# of errors per 100 words*	*# of errors on post-test*	*# of errors per 100 words*	*difference*
001	8/272	2.94	0/540	0	-2.94
002	11/324	3.4	9/672	1.34	-2.06
004	3/275	1.09	4/753	.53	-.56
005	15/210	7.14	20/519	3.85	-3.29
006	4/123	3.25	5/396	1.26	-1.99
008	24/287	8.36	0/494	0	-8.36
009	5/162	3.00	11/376	2.92	-.08
010	9/236	3.81	3/432	.69	-3.12
012	13/564	2.30	4/1092	.36	-1.94



Syntax

Still another means of measuring student writing is by looking at sentence structure and variety. A popular means of measuring syntactic maturity in a writer is to look at T-units, "the shortest grammatically complete segment that a passage can be divided into without creating fragments" (Isaacson 532). T-units have been used as a measure for over 25 years, and researchers have found that there is a significant correlation between the number and length of T-units as a writer becomes older and more experienced. In other words, the mature writer is able to put several kernel sentences together to create more complex structures. Kellogg Hunt, who first did this research in 1965, determined that the average length of T-units for a Grade 12 writer is 14.4 words, for a Grade 8 writer, 11.5 words and for a Grade 4 Writer. 8.6 (56) An analysis of these student papers shows that for the pre-test all but one of the writers was writing in a high school range. Several of them dropped in their length of T-units by the post-test. It is not uncommon, however, for students to "simplify" their writing as they initially become more self-conscious about their writing. Since they are unsure and they want to be correct, they tend to be "safer" in their style of writing.

In addition, the rule of education is that if one does not specifically "teach" to a certain subject, one is not likely to see improvement in that subject. I did not specifically work on T-units with these students so that is another contributing factor to their lack of major increase.

Table 6: A Comparison of T-Unit Lengths Between Pre-test and Post-test

Name	*Pre-test # words per T-unit*	*Post-test # words per T-unit*	*difference*
001	12.4	10.0	-2.4
002	14.7	12.6	-2.1
004	8.8	10.3	+1.5
005	11.6	16.7	+5.1
006	17.5	14.6	-2.9
008	11.4	14.1	+2.7
009	13.5	13.9	+0.4
010	18.1	11.6	-6.5
012	13.4	15.6	+2.2

Vocabulary

In evaluating improvement in vocabulary, Isaacson suggests that a teacher may identify inappropriate words, overused or unused words, and numbers of long or mature words (532). I did not analyze this feature of the students' writing because in an expressive assignment problems in vocabulary are not likely to occur. There is no need for specialized words or anything beyond the realm of normal experience. This feature, therefore, is a more appropriate measure for something like an essay exam.

FINAL GRADES

One other result to be reported, and perhaps the most important, is that 10 of the 12 students enrolled in the course passed. Of the two who did not, one withdrew early in the semester, and the

other did not apply herself until the last two weeks of the course. Of the 10 who did pass, 3 received a B, 6 received a C, and 1 received a D.

CONCLUSIONS

Let me discuss the implications of these results in quantitative terms and then in terms that are based on personal, informal observation.

Perhaps most important quantitatively is that 83% of the class passed the course. Given that none of them had done very well in English 100, the prediction for success in a regular English 101 course was not optimistic. A grade of C in English 100 indicates that the student will have a great deal of difficulty in 101. As I think about the individual attention that some of the students needed, and the boon that the word processor was to them, I doubt that they all would have passed if they had been in a regular English 101 section. Second, the fact that their fluency, content, and spelling improved is another positive implication. Even syntax, which I did not stress, improved.

In nonquantitative terms, Judy and I saw a big improvement in the attitude of the students. All of them improved their self-image. In her book, *Common Sense about Dyslexia*, Anne Marshall Huston identifies types of students that are likely to appear in the middle school and high school classroom: the student who feels superior to everyone, the loner, the easily distracted, and the class clown (129-130). We had them all, yet by the end of the semester, each student had modified his/her behavior to the extent that all were reasonably easy and pleasant to work with. Each of the students became more open to asking questions as the semester went on, and each became more receptive to criticism. Class attendance was very good for nearly all of them, and Judy and I felt that their self-motivation level increased over the course of time.

Most important for these students was that they seemed to gain a considerable measure of independence and control over their writing. For some, the word processor freed them from the problems of their own dysgraphia and numerous spelling errors. For others, the small class and

the individual attention gave them encouragement to generate more text. And for the 10 who passed the course, there was the recognition that passing a writing course was within their control and ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The major difficulty that I encountered with the course this spring was in course management. While it had to be an English 101 course, it would have been easier for me to have taught as English 100. Since much of our time was spent in teaching the students how to use the word processors, I had difficulty following the English 101 syllabus. That problem has been rectified by making the class in the fall English 100 and by adding a lab section to the course.

A second difficulty that I had was in determining how to balance the students need for extra time to complete assignments and their need for structure and staying on a schedule. I erred too many times in giving them extensions when I think I should have demanded that they meet deadlines. I think that problem could be handled by a contract. In future classes I will require a contract with each student with clearly stated expectations.

Judy and I also need to develop a policy for ourselves on the extent to which we will allow re-writing and the extent to which Judy and I will be their editors. There were many instances when I know I was grading Judy's or my writing, not the student writer's.

One other weakness was in the area of out-of-class assignment. As in the case the first time one uses a new textbook, I didn't make maximum use of the assignments that were available and I relied too heavily on all the work being done during class time. My increasing familiarity with the text will alleviate that problem.

Several decisions that I made at the onset of the course were the right ones. Fostering a team approach was wonderful. Judy DeLuca was a godsend in the classroom and I cannot imagine

teaching the course without her or at least her kind of assistance. Although his time with us was limited, Ron Schworm was equally important to making the class as effective as it was. He taught Judy and me learning strategies that we in turn could teach the students. I am looking forward to the help that Ron and our new full-time learning specialist will be able to offer us next year.

Holding the class in a word processing lab also worked well and I appreciate all the support I received from SCT and the staff. One troubling note regarding the use of D205 was that other students often came in and attempted to use word processors. They always left when I told them I was conducting a class, but I confess I resented the invasion. My sense was that these students were feeling pressure from their respective courses and wanted maximum time in the lab and perhaps did not perceive our group as a regular class.

I also felt comfortable with the choice of text. It was short on theory, which was appropriate for these students and the great quantity and variety of exercises helped to foster the lab approach.

As I consider the LD students that I worked with this semester I see three major problems for them as writers. They had trouble with fluency, with organization and with their own editing skills. The research bears out my observations. Englert and Raphael summarize the work of several researchers and make the following statements.

> ...exceptional students reach writing limits far short of the relevant knowledge they have in memory and they lack the strategies to guide them in activating new or more complete knowledge searches (514)

> . . . LD students lacked an understanding of story schema that is essential not only to writing stories but to comprehending them . . . and exceptional students have not acquired a working knowledge of the expository frame works (e.g. a contrast, explanation) that might help them to systematically retrieve and organize their ideas to produce coherent prose (515)

> . . .disabled writers exhibit less control of the writing process and are clearly more dependent on external criteria and resources (e.g. teachers) than on their own internal resources to help them monitor their completeness and accuracy of their texts (516)

Because of these conclusions, the instructional team next year must continue to work in a more systematic way to help the learning disabled writer learn the strategies necessary for coping with his or her disabilities.

SUMMARY

Based on my experiences this past semester, I feel that the college is doing the right thing by creating a special English section for the LD students. As Ron Schworm says, the specialists in the field concur that special sections are required in order to get the interaction that one needs to be effective. While obviously I cannot prove it, my sense is that if these students had been scattered through my regular ENG 101 sections, they would not have passed. They would have "hidden" from me so that I could not have given them extra help even if I had wanted to. They also work so much more slowly than other students that they would have fallen far behind. Finally, they would not have been able to use the word processors in class nor had the immediate access to the extra help provided by Judy DeLuca and others who came into the class. I understand and agree with the general desire to mainstream all kinds of disabled students, but in the case of learning disabled students language skills are so critical to their success in other college courses that they need a special English class. I think this report shows that the special class did indeed make a difference.

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